

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY UDALL PRAISES SPORTSMEN FOR ROLE IN GAME "POPULATION EXPLOSION"

Time has become the implacable enemy of those working to protect America's natural resources, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall warned members of the League of Ohio Sportsmen at Columbus Saturday, February 10.

Speaking before the group's anniversary banquet, the Interior Secretary said:

"With the United States population expanding at a rate of three million a year, the leisurely approach to protecting our outdoors that has marked the past decade is being replaced by new dynamic programs of action."

He pointed out that during the 10-year postwar population explosion less than 100,000 acres of new National Park lands were set aside, compared to the 10 million acres provided by the administrations of Presidents Coolidge, Hoover, and Franklin Roosevelt.

"We are now determining what kind of a future world the 51 million young Americans now in school will enjoy," Secretary Udall said. "We must not only protect the freedoms for this coming generation of leaders, we must leave them an unsullied America, and with the help of the unprecedented conservation programs being mounted by the Kennedy Administration, we can reach this goal."

"It was 45 years between the time the wonders of Yellowstone were first described in print until it was set aside as a park in 1872, and another 20 years before legislation was finally passed to protect its wildlife and wilderness," he said.

"Today, as is evidenced in the virtual disappearance of shoreline wilderness park areas, such a time lag would be fatal," he said.

Secretary Udall warned that the same arguments advanced 90 years ago to have Yellowstone Park reduced in size and opened to commercial exploitation are being used today in an effort to make ineffective the wilderness protection legislation now being considered by Congress.

He praised sportsmen for their leadership in making possible Federal and State game protection and management measures that have helped create "the most amazing record of game population growth in the world."

He told the Ohio sportsmen:

"We too often forget the grim picture of America's wildlife resources before these conservation battles were unleashed.

"It was only 50 years ago that this nation began awakening from its orgy of unrestricted game slaughter. By that time, we had swept the bison--25 million of them--from the plains.

"Free from what was then regarded as un-American restrictions on hunting, much of it of a strictly commercial nature, we had, with a Yankee whoop, depleted to virtual extinction great herds of elk, antelope and deer. Grizzly bear and bighorn sheep existed in quantities only in Canada. The wild turkey had virtually disappeared. The native grouse had vanished from a hundred plains. The passenger pigeon became a stuffed museum piece. What wildlife management programs there were existed in an atmosphere of neglect and often contempt. Enforcement was ignored.

"What is the picture today, thanks to sound conservation practices, game management programs and strict enforcement?

"Let's take inventory:

"Pronghorn antelope: By 1920, the pronghorn antelope had been driven from 80 percent of their range. In all North America, there were less than 30,000 left. Today reliable estimates place the pronghorn antelope population at a half million!

"Elk: By 1910, elk herds numbered about 50,000 head, including 20,000 protected in the Yellowstone National Park reserve. Last year, they numbered a quarter of a million.

"Moose: An excellent lesson in game management can be demonstrated in New Brunswick. There in 1904, three bulls and four cows were introduced. Today from that nucleus, there are 60,000 moose in New Brunswick. Today, in areas such as the Uintah Mountains of Utah, moose herds are developing where they were completely unknown a few generations ago.

"Deer: According to the best available estimates, our total deer population 60 years ago was around a half million head. Today, these herds have increased to an estimated 12 million head.

"You hunters last year brought down two million deer. In 1910 the total take in the entire United States was but 80,000."

Secretary Udall concluded by urging sportsmen to take the leadership in supporting game management and protection measures to insure future generations of the "outdoor experiences that are part of our American tradition."

Game population increases have reached their optimum, and a relentless toll of a million acres a year is being taken of land that supports game, he said, requiring new programs of tighter regulations to maintain a favorable game balance.

"Today we in America stand at the open door of a new and possibly final opportunity," he said. "Our land use patterns will soon be firmly fixed. What we save now--in the 1960's--will be all that can be saved."

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